



BEYOND AR 5, PART I

BY ROB VAUGHN

Dragons are immortal, eternal, and infinite. Just because no scion in the modern age has yet progressed beyond awakened rank 5 does not mean that one cannot. This web enhancement presents optional rules for the means by which FIREBORN scion characters can advance beyond AR 5; to learn what powers this grants beyond normal advancement, check out Secrets of Fire 14!.

AWAKENING

Normally, attaining an awakened rank beyond 5 is impossible, simply because karmic items go no higher than rank 5; without a rank 6 karmic item in your scion's hoard, he should be unable to reach awakened rank 6. However, what the power of one dragon alone cannot accomplish, the power of a brood can. The only question is how it chooses to do so.

CONSUMING THE BROOD

The quickest and most dire way for a scion to advance beyond the natural limitations of his human form is to absorb pure power from one of his broodmates. This unfortunate possibility can combine with a dragons' lust for power to destroy a brood from the inside out.

MURDER

Canabalizing a broodmate's power requires first that the broodmate be killed by the canabilizer. The killing blow must be struck by a karmic item from the scion's mythic age hoard (i.e., an item that would qualify the scion for a hoard rank).

BINDING

An incredibly rare rank 5 spell, Eating the Brother, must then be performed. The range is touch, the duration instantaneous, and it must be performed in the presence of the murderer's hoard.

It also requires that the murdered broodmate's body be present, and must be performed within five days of the murder, minus one day per awakened rank of the victim. If the broodmate is AR 5, the spell must be performed within one hour.

The spell's effect is to bind the broodmate's spirit to the karmic item, keeping it from escaping and being reborn. The murdered broodmate's awakened rank is instead added to the item's karmic rank. So for instance, a rank 1 karmic item used to murder an AR 5 broodmate would become a rank 6 karmic item; once the item is added to the murderer's hoard, it allows the possessor to advance to AR 6. The spirit of the scion trapped within the item is not reborn, and can never reborn, until the karmic item itself is destroyed. If the karmic item is ever drained of all its karma (i.e., its temporary karma rank is ever reduced to 0), the scion's spirit is forever consumed.

CONSEQUENCES

Needless to say, this form of advancement is inherently evil. The murder of one's broodmate in this manner creates taint in a trivial range equal to the murdered broodmate's AR (if the area already has a taint rank of 5, the taint may "spill over" into the next range increment as normal for the creation of taint). There are tales of more experienced or powerful scions discovering this method, aiding their broodmates from afar without ever revealing themselves, and then eventually "harvesting" them, one at a time, as they become powerful enough to be of use to their evil brother.

PLACE OF POWER

A far slower and more limited manner of achieving an awakened rank beyond 5 is to tie oneself, and thereby tie one's power, to an area in which one is nurturing karma.



NURTURING

This can only be done in an area that already has a karma rating of 5, using an item of karmic rank 5, and can only be accomplished by a scion of AR 5 or higher. When the time has come to advance (i.e., when the scion has a heritage rank of 6 and a humanity rank of 6), he may nurture karma in himself, the area he has chosen, *and* a karma 5 item from his mythic age hoard, all at once. The most common location for such an act is in the dragon's lair, where the rest of his hoard is located.

The nurturing takes time as if raising an area from balanced to karma rank 1 (one week). It takes an expenditure of hours each day and karma each day, however, as if the scion were attempting to raise the area's karma rating from 5 to 6 (in other words, 6 hours of effort per day and 6 points of karma).

This process if followed as normal each time the scion wishes to advance to the next higher AR, although the time and effort required to do so advance by one each time (so, to reach AR 7, the scion must spend 7 hours + 7 karma per day, and must do so every day for one full month; to reach AR 8, the scion must spend 8 hours + 8 karma per day, and must do so every day for one full year, and so on).

CONSEQUENCES

Upon completion of the nurturing, the scion is considered to have attained a hoard rank of 6, allowing him to reach AR 6. However, this process irrevocably binds the item, the scion, and the location. The scion is only considered to have AR 6 while within the boundaries of the place of power and while the hoard item remains there. This means that he can only manifest draconic form as if he were AR 5 when outside of that place of power, or if the item is ever taken from that place of power. For all intents and purposes, the area remains at karmic rank 5 and the item remains at karmic rank 5.

EXTENDING

Should a scion wish to extend the range of the area in which he maintains his power, say from trivial to minor, he may do so. However, this requires that the area to be included in his place of power must all already be karmic rank 5. Further, for ever increased range of the place of power, the scion must nurture his place of power as if it were one karmic rank higher. So a scion who wished to create a place of power with minor boundaries in which he could advance to AR 6 would first need to find or create a place with karma 5 out to minor range, and then would have to nurture karma there for one month instead of one week. If he wished to advance to AR 7 in the same place of power, or to advance to AR 6 in an area out to moderate range, he would need to nurture karma there for one year.

As normal, any time taint is spawned in an area, it reduces the karma there; any area within a scion's place of power that is not at karma rank 5 immediately ceases to be a place of power for him.

Creating a place of power is the most common method of advancing beyond AR 5 in the modern age and in those rare times throughout history that magic has awakened enough to allow a scion to remember his previous lives. It neither forces a scion to prey upon his own brood nor forces him to rely on that brood for power, as the *Becoming One* method, below, requires. Yet it often forces a scion to become a recluse, fearful of letting his place of power or the item(s) that are essential to it be damaged or taken from him, and makes some quite powerful creatures hesitant to face any foe outside of their lairs.

BECOMING ONE

This method for attaining AR 6 and higher is less brutal than the *Consuming the Brood* option and less painstaking than the *Place of Power* option, but requires an amazing level of trust and dependence.



COMBINING THE HOARD

Instead of nurturing karmic power in a place and with an item, the brood instead nurtures their karmic energy within one another. The first step is the combination of all of the scions' hoards. Only scions who mingle their hoards and combine their places of power can join their ka in the manner required.

COMBINING KARMA

Second, each member of the brood must permanently invest karma into their brood mind (effectively lowering their maximum karma pool) equal to the AR desired. They'll probably get that karma back (see **Becoming**, Secrets of Fire 14), but you have to pay to play, so to speak. This investment takes place through constant, uninterrupted meditation, requiring one day for the combined desired ARs of the brood. For instance, a brood of four scions at AR 5 who wished to use this method to reach AR 6 would have to meditate for 6×4 days, or 24 days, and each scion would have to permanently sacrifice 6 karma, lowering their max karma pools by 6.

Once this is accomplished, the brood has created a pool of karma that, combined with the unification of their hoards, allows each scion to act as if he had an rank 6 hoard item, and therefore to attain AR 6. However, this power comes with limitations.

CONSEQUENCES

First of all, the scions must keep their hoards together. If any scion removes his hoard from the group's, their effective AR is reduced by 1.

Second, the scions become powerful when near one another, but are weakened when they are apart. Keep track of the greatest boundary rank between each member of the brood and the furthest other member of the brood, ignoring lesser boundary ranks in favor of higher ranks. When the total ranks worth of boundaries between brood members are equal to the brood's

normal AR, the effective AR of the entire brood is lowered by one; when the total is equal to twice the brood's normal AR, the effective AR of the entire brood is lowered by two; and so on.

So for instance, say you have a brood of four AR 7 scions. Then let's say that they all have missions around London, so they're at least separated by moderate (rank 3) boundaries, for a total of $4 \times 3 = 12$. That's greater than AR 7, so the brood's effective AR is lowered to 6. If they gather together in the house they share, they're all separated by trivial (rank 1) boundaries, for a total of $4 \times 1 = 4$. In that circumstance, they're all still effectively AR 7. If two of them suddenly need to take off to separate neighboring cities (rank 4) while the other two continue to patrol the streets and allies of London, the boundaries become $4 + 4 + 3 + 3 = 14$, or twice the brood's AR of 7. In that circumstance, each of the brood is effectively only AR 5. If one of the brood should die, the rest of the brood is considered to be cut off from him as if by a barrier equal in rank to his AR when he died (up to AR 10, even though there are normally no such barriers). This penalty persists until the broodmate is reincarnated, reintegrated into the brood, and reinitiated into the Becoming One process.

Sound nasty? It is! Broods who Become One are essentially binding their lives, their souls, their power, their very existences to one another. A scion of AR 6 or higher is extremely powerful, and the other two methods require that the scion either betray and destroy his closest allies, or that he bind his power to a single place, hampering his ability to affect the wider world. Broods of scions that are of AR 6 or higher are able to travel about freely and use their power at will, but they must pay for that power with the knowledge that they are eternally dependent on their brood, and that any enemies they make will always be watching for times that they are separate from one another, and therefore weaker. Even a simple barrier like a stream or a tree line can mean the difference between a powerful brood and a crippled one.

